


The Virginia Assistive Technology System

Your AT Solution.




Maybe you're looking for a hearing aid or a motorized wheelchair, and you want to know what choices are available to you. Maybe you're getting hand controls for your car, but need to find a therapist who'll help you learn how to use them. Maybe you know what you need to do to make your home accessible, but you want to find out what sort of funding is available to you.

Or maybe you have a child with a disability in the public school system, and want to know his or her rights to assistive technology.

Whatever your situation, if it has to do with devices that make life easier for people with disabilities, at the Virginia Assistive Technology System, we consider it our job to help you get them. Because our purpose is to bring the community of people with all disabilities the solutions they need to "level the playing field." That solution could be a simple gadget to improve your day-to-day routine. A high-tech creation with applications for accessibility. Or just the name of the right person to call to get exactly what you need.

What is the Virginia Assistive Technology System?



Every day, new products and services are being created for people with disabilities. But knowing what is out there – and how to get it – can be quite a challenge. That is why the Virginia Assistive Technology System, or VATS, has been developed: to improve access to assistive technology information, devices, services and funding for all Virginians.

VATS' activities are guided by the Virginia Council on Assistive Technology, a consumer-driven advisory group which includes vendors, service providers, educators, agency representatives – and mostly, consumers of assistive technology, people who actually use these devices and services in their day-to-day lives. Since these consumers play such a major role on our team, we're able to offer solutions based in the real world.

Funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, VATS is administered by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. VATS has four regional offices which are located throughout Virginia, and a central office in Richmond.



What, exactly, is assistive technology?

By definition, assistive technology, or AT, is any item that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. There are literally thousands of these items available today. Here are just a few examples: communication devices such

as voice output devices, large-button telephones and speech amplifiers; items like pocket organizers and medication organizers; sensory enhancers such as text magnifiers and speech synthesiz-

ers; environmental controls like special switches, and doorbells that send flashing lights; mobility devices including scooters and walkers; and self-care items like utensils, toileting assists, and lift and transfer equipment.

How is VATS helping people?

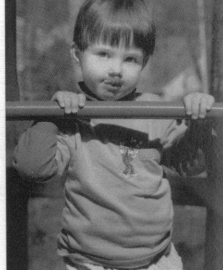
Personal Contact: Feel free to call or stop by any of our four regional sites, or our central office in Richmond. We'd be happy to meet with you, and to share any information we have.

Consumer Database.

Through our Information and Referral System, you can have access to an incredible amount of information on assistive technology products, funding options, and resources that range from therapists to service providers to assistive technology vendors.

Advocacy. If you want to know what your rights are when it comes to assistive technology, give us a call. And if you believe your rights are being denied when it comes to assistive technology, we want to know. We're here to offer you advice and direction.

At VATS, we take pride in serving as a systems change project. One way we've changed the system is with the establishment of the "Lemon Law." VATS, in collaboration with consumers and providers, helped this law become reality, so that consumers of assistive technology would be awarded special guarantees on the devices they purchase. Today, we continue to serve as an advocate of the community we serve.



Publications. As an AT information resource, we have a library of reprints of articles pertaining to assistive technology – and our publication resources are always expanding. For example, our publication *Assistive Technology in the Student's Individualized Education Program* can help parents of children with disabilities. And our *Resource Guide to Assistive Technology Funding* gives you names and addresses of assistive technology resources statewide.

Annual Conference. Each year, hundreds of Virginians with disabilities attend our conference, where they get to see and try assistive technology devices from all over the country. At these conferences, consumers and professionals share vital information about the world of AT. And perhaps best of all, people with disabilities get to share information and advice with one another, in a forum that is completely accessible.

Creative Initiative Awards. At VATS, we know that some of the best ideas and most creative AT solutions have yet to be developed or shared. So we offer small grants called creative initiative awards. These awards are offered on a competitive basis to organizations and individuals, so they can come up with new AT devices, programs and strategies. This "grass roots" program is one way VATS is supporting local needs.



Website. At VATS, we're primarily an information resource - and we've included

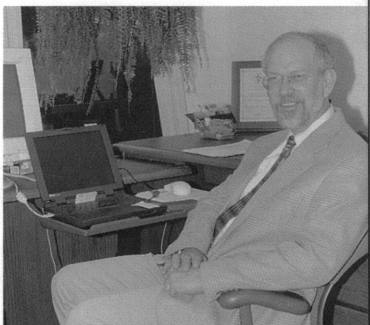


plenty of it on our website, **www.vats.org**. Through this site, you have access to searchable databases on assistive technology. You can find a huge amount of information on assistive technology devices and services, both on this site and through the links it provides. Special features of **www.vats.org** include consumer chat rooms, where you can discuss your assistive technology interests. You can post items for resale on the used equipment exchange, and download VATS publications. And since this site was developed to demonstrate accessibility, we provide options to choose graphics, or text-only for screen reader users.

Learn more about VATS.

To find out more about what VATS has to offer, give us a call at (804) 662-9990 (voice/text) or (800) 552-5019 (voice/text). Or visit our website at **www.vats.org**

Alternative format materials available upon request.



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